

# Design

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR MANUFACTURERS AND DESIGNERS



Number 32 : August 1951

THE COUNCIL OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN : PRICE TWO SHILLINGS



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# Design

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR MANUFACTURERS AND DESIGNERS

Issued by the Council of Industrial Design  
and the Scottish Committee of the Council

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WHITeHALL 6322

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 25s a year,  
post free, from the Circulation Manager,  
DESIGN, Tilbury House, Petty France,  
London SW1, or 2s a copy from newsagents

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: from the Ulster Farm and Factory Exhibition. Gordon Russell comments: "Rooms such as this, founded on a rational attempt to plan living space to suit the conditions of our day, are becoming more widely accepted in England. In Northern Ireland I did not see any shop which thought it worth while to mirror contemporary life in its showrooms. An exhibition is therefore of very special value to introduce new ideas."

Photograph: Keystone Press Agency Ltd

## 'Designers in Britain'

PROBABLY NO OTHER COUNTRY is so richly endowed—or so tiresomely cluttered, depending on your point of view—with bodies, societies and organisations devoted to improving art and design as is present-day Britain. This may be but another manifestation of what the editor of *The Observer* has recently called our Cultural Ice Age; where there is no spontaneous intercourse between artists and the public, men of goodwill must rush in to fill the gap. Or it may be evidence of a national renaissance in the arts; publicity, propaganda and promotion may create that public interest and enthusiasm without which the artist will not venture from the shelter of his studio. There can be no doubt of DESIGN's interpretation, for we are paid for our belief in the power of persuasion, but we agree with *The Observer* that the primary difference between this stopgap sponsorship and full-blooded communal patronage is that "the new protectors give opportunities but no orders."

And therein lies the first importance of *Designers in Britain*, the biennial review of British graphic and industrial design, for all the work illustrated has been commissioned and paid for by enlightened but hard-headed businessmen. Due prominence is given to this fact in the present edition by the inclusion of an index of clients. It is an impressive list, a rich cross-section of British industry, suggesting the real seat of patronage today and, by its proportional representation, fairly reflecting the design standards in individual industries. Who outside Stourbridge, for instance, would object to the inclusion of a solitary piece of table-glass, or who outside Sheffield would say that cutlery has been unjustly treated?

Thus *Designers in Britain* is important, secondly, for its high degree of selectivity. It is edited for the publishers by the Society of Industrial Artists to show the best designs by named designers (whether members of the SIA or not) executed since the last edition in 1949. Many designs and products have doubtless been excluded by the ban on anonymity, but there remains a sufficient volume of work to discount charges of cliquishness and to dispel fears of uniformity and standardisation. Indeed, in the Industrial Design section, many influences may be detected; as Dr Nikolaus Pevsner says in his brief and tantalising historical introduction, "the crux is to recognise trends and place accents accurately." There is, thank goodness, as catholic a multiplicity of accents in these pages as any reasonable shopkeeper could require.

P. R.



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# DETAIL ON THE SOUTH BANK

by Lionel Brett

MOST PEOPLE AGREE that the main conception of the South Bank Exhibition is a stroke of genius; many people feel that the standard of display is terribly clever (too clever for its audience); few people in the general dazzle have looked closely at the little things that give the clue to style. It is in its minor equipment and detail that an age reveals its character—a sideboard from Carlton House tells us more of its period than we would have learnt from the building itself. This is as well, for much of the South Bank equipment will survive long after the Exhibition has gone for ever.

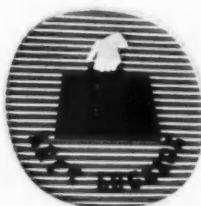
One should first recognise that on the whole the battle has been won. We all know the relentless pressure upon the designer from every direction to drop his standards and accept the second-best or the traditional. Telephone boxes, lamp standards, fire equipment, litter bins; they all exist, cheap, ready to hand. Sometimes (as with the shoe-blacks' chairs) long habit has given them a certain point, a respected ugliness that will have its defenders. The designer has to distinguish the valid traditional shape of lifeboat or flower-pot from the merely habitual, and his only guide is his own eye—whose verdict can seldom be put into words for the benefit of committees. That there are so few lapses is, therefore, a triumph for those who kept up the fight.

What should have the strongest influence is the street furniture. Councillors of seaside towns,

borough engineers, manufacturers, users, anyone can see that if these objects are well designed you get an atmosphere of fun and gaiety instead of restriction and control. Bollards, lamp-posts, shelters, litter-bins, seats, kiosks; how they can murder a scene, and how they can enliven it! It could also be learnt from these objects on the South Bank that there are other

colours besides black and white for traffic equipment and Brunswick green for everything else. Perhaps the basic point is that there is no need for street furniture to apologise for itself by camouflage colouring or lamely traditional design. If it is to be useful, it must be noticeable, and England is grey enough without neglecting these opportunities for a blob of colour.

It is apparent in these objects, and still more in the architectural detail of the exhibition, that British designers are cleverer and more at home with metal than with wood—which was only to be expected. It was the same in 1851, except that then they were too clever, and had still to be taught by Morris, Ruskin and Lethaby that materials, like animals, have their modesties and dignity, and that though you can teach an old dog new tricks, they must not be monkey tricks. Here in 1951, the decorative use of steel is an outstanding feature: its tensile strength and slimmness are exploited but never abused. There are a score of variations on the theme of the floating stair and steel balustrade, and among the



OPPOSITE: *South Bank detailing: the tapered hardwood treads, central string, elegant handrail and the lightness of the whole building are characteristics of the style of the exhibition.*

Regatta Restaurant. Architects and interior designers: Misha Black, OBE, FSIA, and Alexander Gibson, ARIBA

ABOVE: "Left Luggage" sign in brightly painted steel.

Exhibition signposting co-ordinated by Milner Gray, RDI, FSIA, assisted by Kenneth Lamble and Sylvia Read

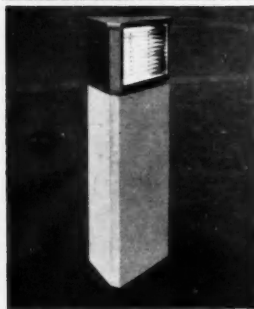
DETAIL ON THE SOUTH BANK *continued*



ABOVE, LEFT: Outdoor steel chairs with various brightly coloured plywood seats. Designed by Ernest Race, FSIA, and manufactured by Ernest Race Ltd (*Antelope* model)  
RIGHT: Outdoor chairs in perforated metal. Designed by A. J. Milne, MSIA, and manufactured by Heal and Son Ltd



RIGHT: The old park seat in a new form, showing fresh thought given to an old problem.



Benches with combined legs and back supports designed by Brian Leather, Dip. Arch, ARIBA, and John Sheldon, ARIBA

Benches attached to external brick wall designed by Misha Black, OBE, FSIA, and Alexander Gibson, ARIBA



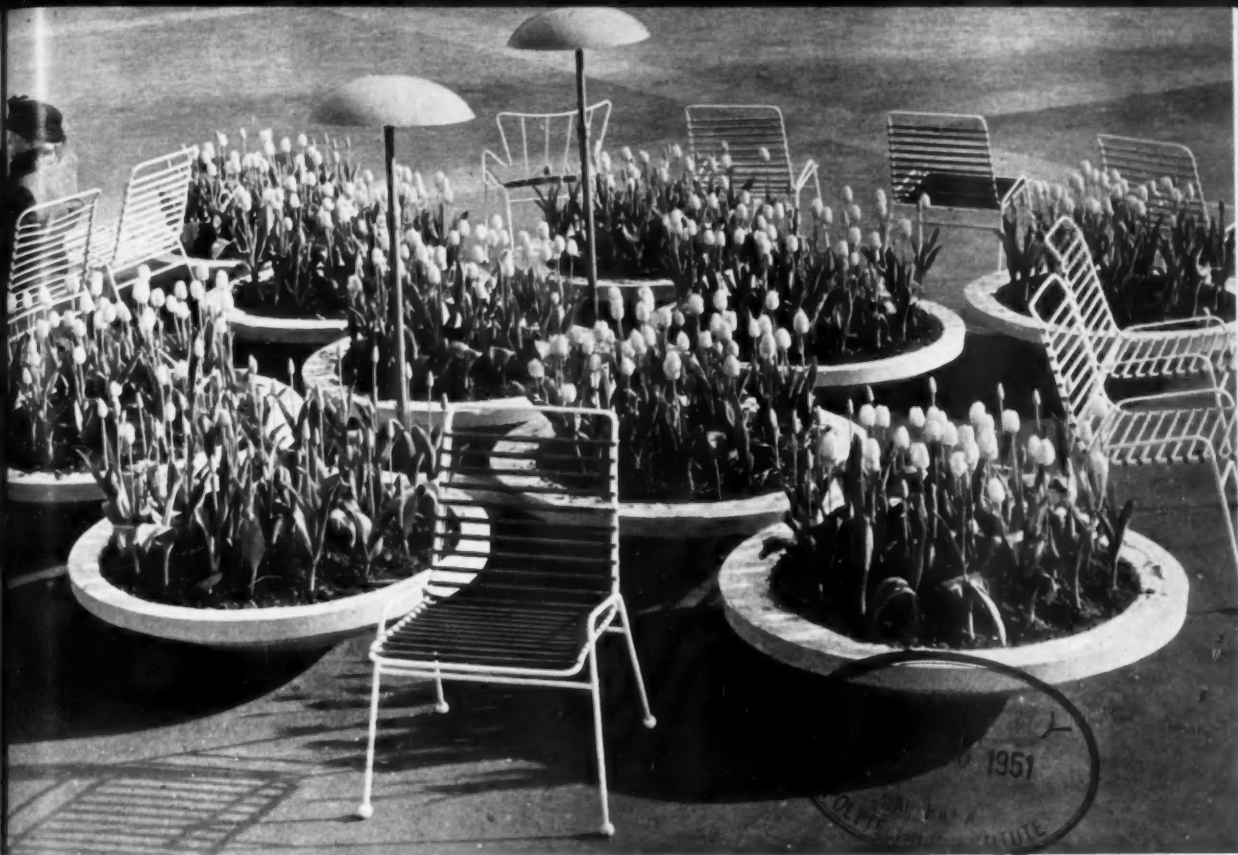
Two excellent bollards, the black with its solid base perhaps more expressive of its purpose. By contrast, the bollard-like drinking fountain seems unnecessarily clumsy.

Reading from the top: Bollard near Dome of Discovery designed by H. T. Cadbury-Brown, ARIBA, in consultation with Edison Swan.

Bollard near Harbour Bar designed by Hugh Casson, MA, FRIBA, in consultation with GEC.

Drinking water fountain designed by James Cubitt, MBE, BA, ARIBA, and Partners





*Object-lesson to seaside authorities; the concrete flower-tubs (like much else) are Swedish in inspiration, the sort of import long overdue in this country. Chairs by Ernest Race*

many functional uses for items of equipment it is interesting to note that solid steel has almost everywhere replaced tubular steel for chairs, with a consequent gain in elegance and freedom of line.

There is not, for a change, any great play with startling "new" materials. Glass, with Perspex and other plastics, have their place, but they are used in a straightforward way without any straining for novelty. One senses a reaction from the 'twenties and 'thirties, when no exhibition was complete without a model of the Houses of Parliament in sugar or butter and a map of the Empire in marbles and precious stones. If this is obligatory economy, then thank the Lord Festival, who has forced designers to use simple materials to produce an effect that is nothing less than overwhelming, particularly at night.

It is easy to see that this style of the 'fifties will be thought flimsy and effeminate by the next generation, but we should lose no sleep on that account. It



*Sudden shock of a traditional object; whether let in by accident or as a joke one does not know*

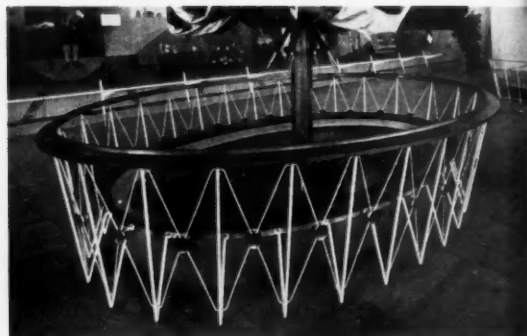
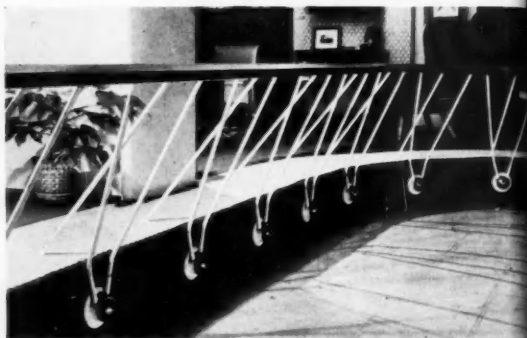


*Wood is seldom used with real originality by British designers, but the fin-like handrails in the Thameside Restaurant are among the more successful examples.*

Designers: Neville Ward, B. Arch, ARIBA, and Frank Austin, MSIA

#### DETAIL ON THE SOUTH BANK *continued*

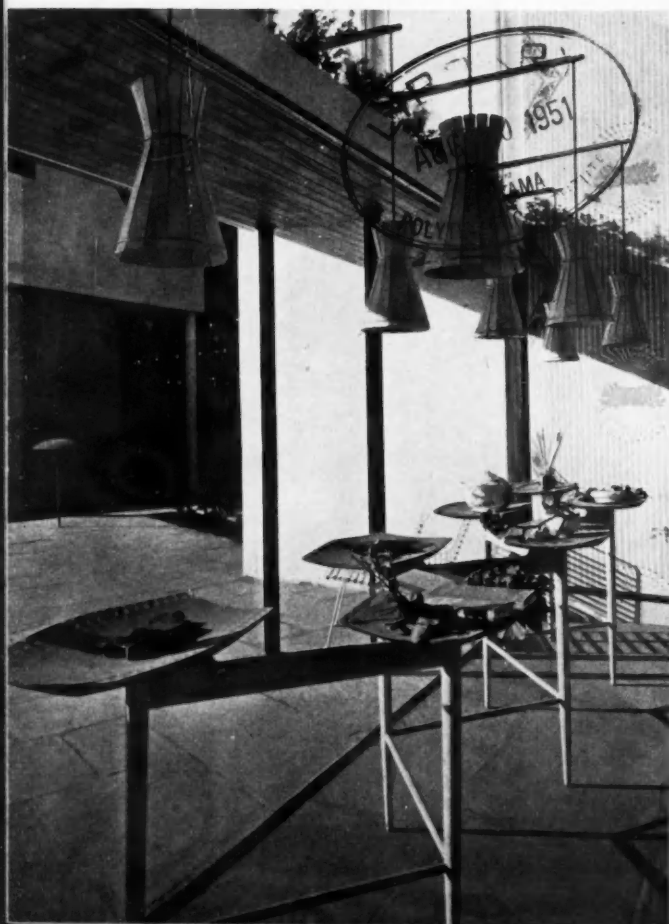
reflects a public mood just as the New Look did, and we have reason to be certain that in its way, and of its kind, it has real quality. One's only fear is that it has reached a degree of refinement from which there is no advance except by a complete change of direction that nobody wants. It is to be hoped that the leaders will not think it necessary to right-wheel or left-wheel until the whole column has come out into the straight.



*Exhibition balustrades: two chosen at random from the many graceful white-painted railings that, with water and colour, form the outstanding decorative elements on the South Bank.*

ABOVE: handrail in parlour section of Homes and Gardens pavilion, designed by Eden Minns, FSIA, and Bianca Minns.

BELOW: handrail round group of flags in The Lion and The Unicorn pavilion, designed by Richard Guyatt

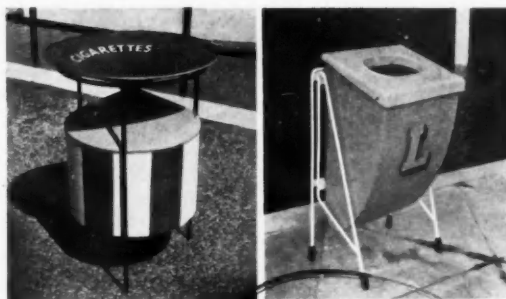


*Other examples of wood used with originality are the elegant display tables in The Lion and The Unicorn pavilion with their wood-shaded lighting.*

Tables designed and made by David Pye, ARIBA, MSIA; lampshades designed by R. D. Russell, RDI, FSIA

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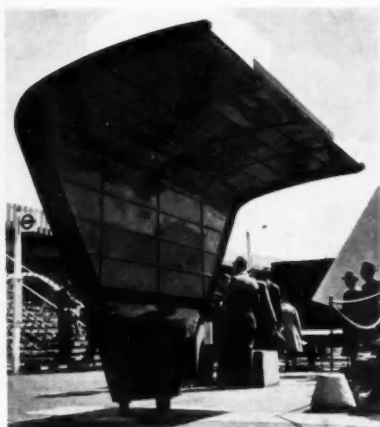


More new thought on an old problem: the cigarette- and litter-bins are typical of the neat use of steel throughout the exhibition.

Cigarette-bins designed by James Cubitt and Partners; litter-bins designed by Jack Howe, AARIBA, MSIA

LEFT: Built-in café tables, repetitive light brackets, steel chairs with racks for trays and space below for hat and coat.

From the Thameside Restaurant designed by Neville Ward and Frank Austin



ABOVE: A London Transport exhibit lacking the grace of most of the incidental equipment of the exhibition.

Designed by Arcon



ABOVE: Steel rack for magazines. The functional and decorative use of steel is one of the design triumphs of the exhibition; there is practically no example of its misuse.

Designed by Neville Conder and Patience Clifford, AARIBA, for Design Review

RIGHT: Lettering generally is fairly fat, early nineteenth century in inspiration. Here it is splendidly Victorian. There is little Gill Sans or Trajan.

Designed for the fascia of The Lion and The Unicorn pavilion by John Brinkley, ARCA





## INSTITUTE AND INDUSTRY

*The Boston Institute of Contemporary Art is co-operating with manufacturers in their efforts to raise the standard of design in silver, fabrics, pottery, glass, watches . . .*

"TO HELP RAISE the general level of design in American industry": this is the declared purpose of the Department of Design in Industry of the Institute of Contemporary Art of Boston, Massachusetts, which, over the last three years, has been co-operating with US manufacturers in a new kind of training scheme—the central feature of the Institute's "Design in Industry Program."

Corning Glass Works and its subsidiary Steuben Glass were the first firms to co-operate, in January 1948; not long afterwards, other well-known manufacturers of quantity-produced consumer goods joined the Program, which includes 11 firms—one retail store and 10 manufacturers whose products include pottery, glass, fabrics, furniture, silver, linoleum and watches. The firms participating in this scheme up to the time of going to press were: Corning Glass Works; Steuben Glass, Inc; Reed and Barton, silver-smiths; Shenango Pottery; Baker Furniture Co; Cheney Brothers, fabrics; Congoleum-Nairn, linoleum; Haviland and Co Inc, china; Fostoria Glass Company, glassware; Elgin National Watch Co; Paine Furniture Company, retailers.

The most important activity of the Department is the selection of specialist designers for training within industry. The method of working is well described in a recent paper by John B. Ward,\* Director of Design of the Corning Glass Works, on the "pilot training program" adopted by that company:



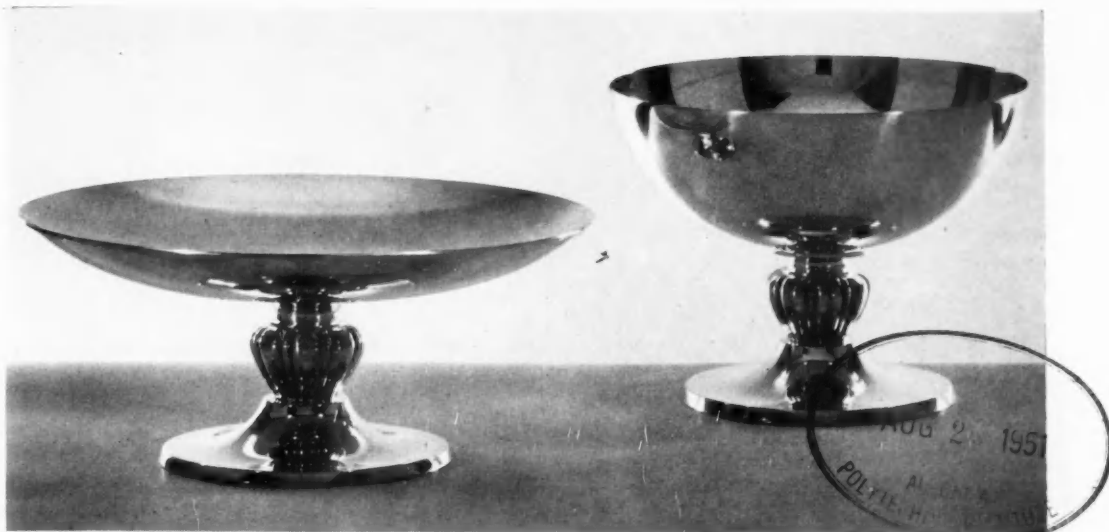
We secured the services of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston because they were in constant touch with educational institutions all over the country and were recognised for their progressive attitude with respect to the designer's place in industry. The Institute interviewed Honours students across the country for our future design organisation, and from the several hundred students who were contacted, 45 were selected for a final interview. Of these, the 12 most suited to our requirements of ability, interest, and personality were selected to attend a training programme in the summer of 1948.

An area was set aside at our main plant in Corning to provide a drafting room and an adjacent amphitheatre so that an eight-week programme of working with glass as a material could be presented. During this eight-week period, the 12 designers became intimately familiar with the material and the techniques in its forming and finishing by hand methods. Designs resulting from assignments were executed by skilled craftsmen in front of the assembled designers. The resulting product was assessed by the group from the standpoint of best use of material and techniques without any reference to the validity of the design for our use.

At the end of this eight-week programme, four designers were selected to work with the Steuben Glass organisation, which is one of our subsidiaries, and three were retained for a further four-week course to get a general overall picture of the machine production methods and the various glasses used by Corning. At the completion of the course, the designers were transferred to New York City where the Design Department Headquarters are located.

The designers chosen for training, for this and other firms collaborating in the Design Development

\* See also DESIGN No 27, p. 17.



Examples from the "contemporary group" of silver and plate developed by Reed and Barton staff designers under the ICA's guidance. The designs—representing "the efforts of a team of promising artists trained in American schools of design and architecture and conversant with the need for simple, practical accessories in modern living"—include centrepieces, candelabra, dessert sets, bonbon dishes, bowls, plates and the sauce-boat illustrated on page 8

Program, are always especially recommended for their promise, and often are already recognised for achievement in the fine arts—as sculptors, ceramists, painters and so on. For this reason, instruction in design *per se* is omitted from their training, which concentrates on technique. The standard is high: from the 12 candidates originally selected for training at Corning Glass Works, for example, only two failed to qualify. (Of the total 12, three had not been regarded as potential staff designers, in view of their established reputation as independent artists, but they are now considered as "associate designers.")

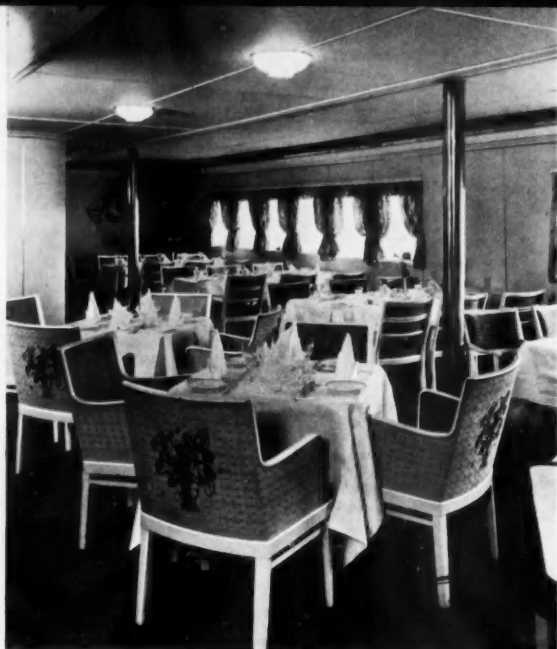
The Elgin watch company—whose association with the Institute is more recent—is holding a six-week design course, which began on 16 June, for graduate students from several art colleges. This has been organised with the collaboration of the Institute. Moreover, Elgin "expect to expand considerably [their] design department with the assistance of the Institute, which is engaged actively at present in seeking out talented students who would be qualified for this work." Already, they have co-operated with the design department of Reed and Barton in designing a special silver box for a new watch which is intended to commemorate the production, next autumn, of the 50,000,000th jewelled Elgin timepiece.

The liaison between industry and artist, often uneasy and superficial, has been materially assisted by the Department of Design, thanks to its co-operation

with manufacturers and its close connection, as a branch of an educational institution, with both artists and students. The Director of the Department, Theodore S. Jones, is experienced as an educational administrator as well as in training and research; and the Advisory Committee consists of known authorities on design, education and industry: among the first members, for example, were Serge Chermayeff, President of the Chicago Institute of Design, and Alfred M. Frankfurter, the Editor of *Art News*.

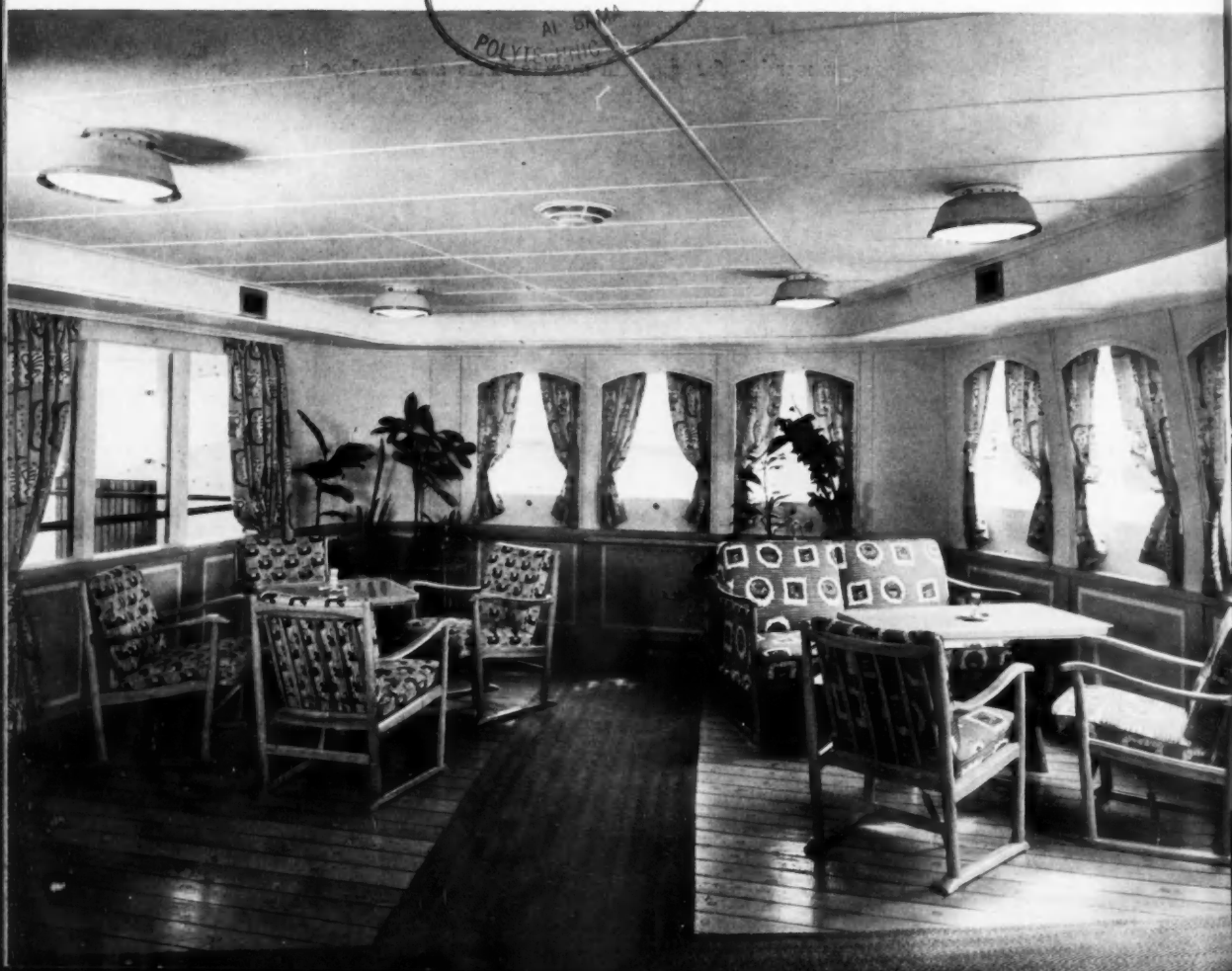
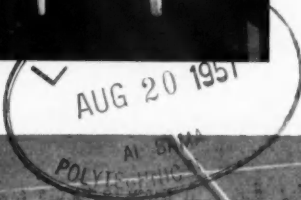
In its capacity as design adviser to industry, the Department's activities are necessarily varied. In addition to the selection and supervision of trainees, and a survey of design in the industries with which it is so far connected, it studies the attitude to design of public and retailers, and discusses design problems with manufacturers, retailers, industrial designers and educational bodies; it has also a library and reference file available to the public. Collaborating firms make full use of these facilities: for instance, the Paine Furniture Company, a Boston retail store, consults the Department of Design over the engagement of staff and the selection of stock, and seeks its criticisms of layout, installation and display.

The programme is wide, but the ultimate goal is never lost sight of: satisfaction to the consumer by raising design standards. In the words of the Institute's Director, James S. Plaut, "in the end the consumer is bound to be the winner."



*Aerial view of the Blenheim, showing her unconventional funnel*

*Left, the first-class dining room. The chair-backs are covered with check union in natural colour and blue, with a specially printed glazed pot of flowers in pink and blue*



# NEW SHIPS FROM FIVE COUNTRIES

by Hope Lovell, Overseas Intelligence Section, Council of Industrial Design

New developments in naval architecture must be matched by advances in interior design and furnishing. Fitting-out a ship includes all the problems of furnishing a hotel, together with the need at once to simulate stability for the nervous and to underline adventure for the light-hearted traveller. As the passenger is "confined to barracks" for the duration of his voyage, every endeavour of skill and wit must be used to make his surroundings pleasant and uncramped. These pages illustrate a variety of styles from some of the great shipping countries.

## MS **BLenheim** (Norway)

This single-screw passenger motorship has recently been praised by *The Shipping World* as "a remarkable example of modern ideas in naval architecture." The extensive use of aluminium, particularly for the bridge and superstructure above the boat deck and for the combined funnel and mast, has encouraged an unconventional design. The *Blenheim* operates on the Oslo-Newcastle service of the Fred Olsen Line. She has a gross tonnage of approximately 5,000 tons. Her hull was built at Southampton by John I. Thornycroft and Co and the ship was completed in Norway by A/S Akers Mek. Verksted.

The interior decoration was carried out under the direction of the Norwegian architect Arnstein Arneberg. He has made use of fabrics by British designers, manufactured in England. Despite the difficulties encountered in using a non-Norwegian product, the architect insisted on having these Heal's textiles, which combine excellently with the Norwegian furniture and provide the main pattern-interest in the different rooms. This happy association of British and Norwegian design throws into prominence one of the most interesting aspects of ship-interior decoration—the possibility of a cross-fertilisation of ideas between two or more countries, usually those between which

the ship operates. Another example of this fruitful exchange is seen in the *Rio de la Plata* (page 14), fitted out in Italy for an Argentine company, and providing a remarkably different background of living from the *Blenheim*.

The *Blenheim* is equipped to carry 237 passengers in three classes. The first-class accommodation consists mainly of single-berth cabins, together with special suites on the upper deck. The second-class accommodation is in two-berth cabins, which can, if necessary, be converted to allow the vessel to be used as a one-class ship. The third-class passengers are given group accommodation. There are several bathrooms and toilet rooms on each deck, and there is also a Finnish steam bath.



Left, the first-class "winter garden." The variety of textiles used contributes to the freshness and gaiety of this room. Textile designs by Jane Edgar and Sylvia Priestley for Heal's

The second-class saloon. Yellow, maroon and grey-blue fabrics enhance the texture of the birch and teak furniture

## SS INDEPENDENCE (USA)

As her name implies, the *Independence* owes little to the influence of other countries; the designer's aim was to portray "Modern American Living at Sea." (Saul Steinberg, please illustrate). She is a first-class example of American skill in easing the business of living. Henry Dreyfuss, the industrial designer who designed her interior, co-operated from the earliest stages with the owners and the naval architect, thus

bringing about several economies and a more flexible treatment. A large number of the built-in items, for instance, were prefabricated, with consequent economy of time and labour.

The *Independence* (26,000 tons) is owned by American Export Lines Inc and sails on an eight-day express service from New York to France and Italy. She provides accommodation for 1,003 passengers in first, cabin, and tourist classes. Small groups of state-rooms can be converted from one class to another with accompanying convertibility of public areas. The entire accommodation is air-conditioned and port-holes are "of the non-opening type."



*Bedroom of a three-room suite on the bridge of the Independence. Dorothy Liebes designed the fabrics. The built-in cabinets were specially designed by Henry Dreyfuss with recessed drawer-pulls and rounded corners*

*The Barbary Tavern, a cabin-class bar and smoking lounge on the bridge deck, suggesting but not copying a waterfront inn*





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This inside stateroom for four in the *Independence* is quickly convertible from living-room (left) to bedroom (right). The folding berths in the bulkhead are released by pedals. A light colour scheme helps to overcome the absence of light from outside



## MS OCEAN QUEEN (Norway)

The *Ocean Queen* of 3,000 tons, built at the Framnes Works, Sandefjord, is primarily a fruit boat and carries a maximum of twelve passengers.

Her interiors were fitted out by Hiorth og Qstlyngen, of Oslo, under their chief designer, Alf Sture, working in collaboration with the shipping company's Bergen consultant, Roald Amundsen. Several of the more interesting pieces of furniture were specially designed by Sture and his colleague, Tormod Alnaes. The whole job was acclaimed by *Bonytt*, the Norwegian design journal, as a particularly fine example of Norwegian design at its best and most typical. The simplicity, amounting almost to severity, of the rooms, is notable for its elimination of everything but ease and dignity.



The *Ocean Queen*'s owner's suite shows a room well suited for permanent living quarters

The careful design of the deck-chair, below left, is typical of the attention given throughout to matters of detail

Our photographs of this ship, including the exterior view, below, are reproduced by courtesy of Bonytt, Oslo



MS **RIO DE LA PLATA** (Argentine)

The *Rio de la Plata* was built in Italy by the Soc. Anon. Ansaldo, of Genoa, for the Argentine Flota Mercante del Estado. She sails between Italy and the Argentine and has a gross tonnage of 8,400, with accommodation for 116 passengers in one class only.

The interiors have been designed by Gustavo Pulitzer of Genoa, who has been responsible for a number of luxurious ship interiors coming from Italy recently.

The Latin approach to interior decoration shows a splendour that is missing in the Scandinavian. This ship, in particular, seems to be the result of a synthesis of ideas from the Old World and from the New

"Italianate American" is likely to be one of the fashionable styles of tomorrow; in some eyes at least, the combination of American ingenuity with Italian decorative style will be a formidable opponent to Scandinavian simplicity. The world's shipping routes may well see the first encounters in this battle of the styles.

It is interesting to compare the interiors of the *Rio de la Plata* with the *Independence*, which, though claiming to be purely American, has obvious debts to North European taste.

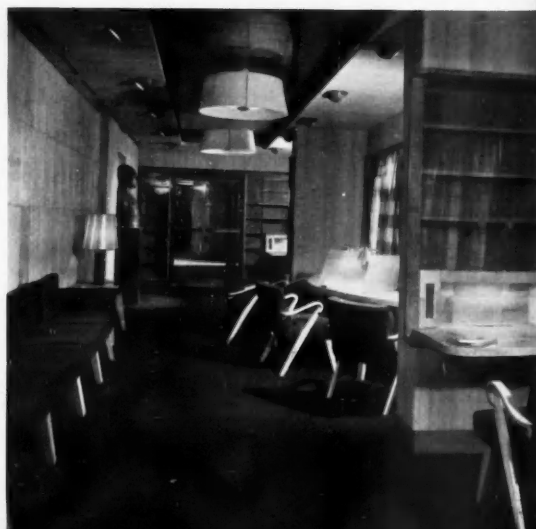
The *Rio* shares the liking of the *Independence* for extensive use of glass, which gives a sense of space to the public rooms; for instance, the bar illustrated below has (to the right of the part photographed) a large sloping glass partition overlooking the swimming pool. The designer's originality in his handling of materials has led him to such experiments as the use of linoleum as a wall-covering on staircase walls.



The first-class bar (Rolling down to Rio?) combines unusual surface textures in its honeycomb ceiling and mosaic bar-front



Above, right, a typical state-room. The massive lamp must be attributed to current New World fashion



The writing-room owes much of its effect to lack of fuss in the furnishings. Glass shields on the tables ensure privacy

MS **ESPERIA** (Italy)

The interior of the MS *Esperia* is also the work of Gustavo Pulitzer. This vessel sails on the Italy-Egypt route with intermediate stops. She has a gross tonnage of 9,314 and can carry a total passenger list of 546—115 in the first class, 83 second, and 348 third. She is owned by the Adriatica Line of Venice.

The *Esperia* again shows this designer's interest in wall-surfaces. In the entrance-hall illustrated on right, an example is provided by the mural painted on canvas by G. Majoli.

*Grand-Hotel-at-Sea: the Esperia's first-class entrance hall*



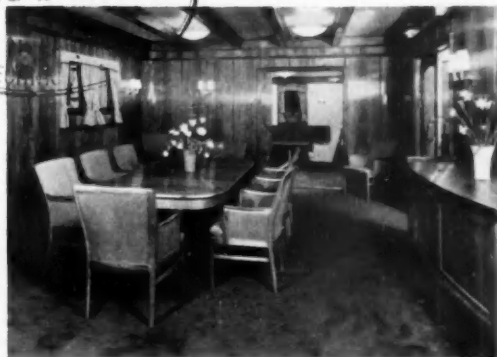
MS **JANUS** (Norway)

The *Janus* is the only ship in this selection which has no passenger accommodation. She is a tanker of 24,850 tons built by the Furness Shipbuilding Co for a Norwegian owner and furnished by A. Hulten Snickerifabrik of Malmö, Sweden (architect, A. Tilberg), with accommodation for owner, officers, and crew—yet another variation of international collaboration in this field.

As might be expected, there is a similarity of treatment between the owner's dining saloon shown here and the owner's room on page 13, though restraint is less conspicuous in the *Janus*. Her crew's mess-room seems bleak in comparison, but there is something to be said for this complete unclutteredness. In an increasing number of new ships, more attention is being given to the living conditions of the crew which, in the past, have been notoriously bad.

*The captain's and owner's dining saloon in the Janus (above, right) has the same honesty as the Ocean Queen's—with a heaviness avoided in the latter ship*

*The austerity of the Janus crew's mess-room is in contrast with the saloon above or any of the other interiors in these pages*

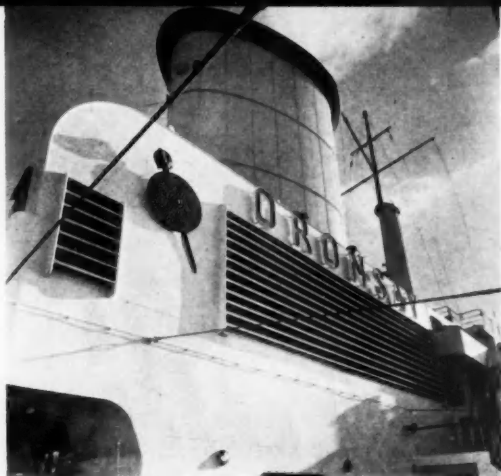


NEW SHIPS *continued*

RMS **ORONSAY** (Great Britain)

The new *Oronsay* is the latest ship of the Orient Line to be fitted out to the designs of Brian O'Rorke, RDI, FRIBA, FSIA. DESIGN No. 26 told the story of the *Orion* and the *Orcades*, and the press recently has given a great deal of attention to this latest venture of the Orient Line. Waring and Gillow were the contractors for both rooms illustrated below.

The *Oronsay*, which was built at the Barrow Works of Vickers-Armstrong, has a gross tonnage of approxi-



*The Oronsay follows the same general lines as the Orcades but replaces the tripod mast by a single streamlined mast embodying the radar scanner. She has also a longer, lower funnel casing. The badge was designed by Lynton Lamb, FSIA*

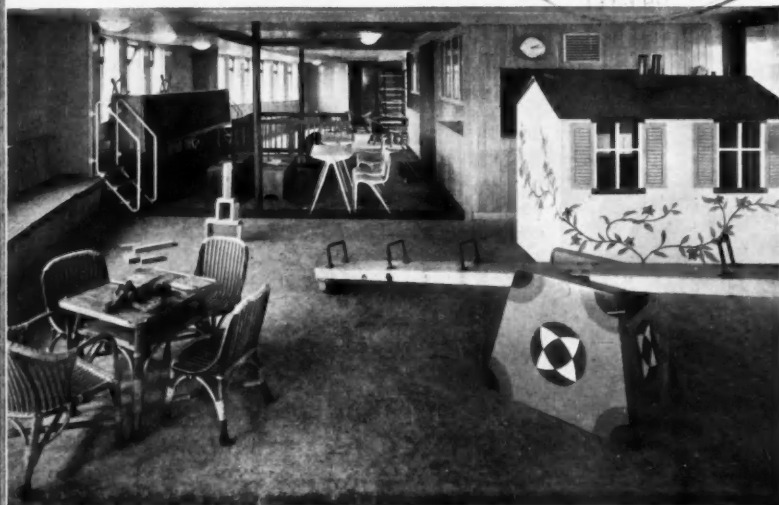
*The Oronsay's first-class library has a single low window looking over the sea—here curtained in a modernised toile de jouy fabric*



mately 28,200 with accommodation for 668 first-class and 833 tourist passengers.

One of the Australian elements in the design is contributed by Douglas Annand of Sydney, whose patterns appear on the wall surface in the restaurant on A Deck. These drawings were made direct on to specially prepared paper which was then pressed into Waverite plastic sheets. The lounge presents, in contrast, an English picture—a mural by Edward Bawden. The *Oronsay* is the first ship to incorporate crystal structure patterns by a member of the Festival Pattern Group (Waverite Ltd) in her decoration.

In general layout the *Oronsay's* designer, like the *Independence*, had to face the problem of facilitating the formation of small groups in large rooms. The dining-room stretches the full width of the ship, and is broken up by slatted panelled screens placed at intervals along the length, giving an unusual floor plan.



*Left, the children's playroom on B Deck. The dummy bridge on left is faced with blackboards. Note ESA desks and chairs, centre*



## Northern Ireland's Festival Exhibition

# ULSTER FARM AND FACTORY

by Gordon Russell

I MUST ADMIT I went to Belfast with a feeling that the Festival Exhibition there might not live up to the high architectural, display and design standard set by those in London and Glasgow. Perhaps this pessimism was engendered by recollections of a visit to Belfast a couple of years ago when I attended a meeting of manufacturers in the Ministry of Commerce and found very little interest displayed in any industrial design problems.

But in 1951 I came back convinced that Ulster had handled her contribution to the Festival of Britain with both imagination and common sense. The subject chosen was Ulster Farm and Factory, and, by happy inspiration, it was decided to build a factory on

a new factory estate at Castlereagh, some four miles from the centre of Belfast, housing the industrial section of the exhibition in it till it was turned over to production. As the new estate has low hills and farmland around it, the emphasis on agriculture is completely convincing and many parts of the exhibition are in the open air, as will be seen from the photographs. On 1 June, the day on which Her Majesty the Queen opened it, the weather could not have been kinder and the way in which the city had determined

1: The photograph at top of page gives an impression of the Exhibition's rural setting, though so near a large city. The glass-sided restaurant, right, has an open terrace in front of it with gaily coloured umbrellas over the tea tables





2: This comparatively small stand gives an impression of the wide variety of products of the Northern Ireland rope industry from twine to hawsers, some idea of its infinite variety of uses and at the back a rope-walk, the form of which has remained fairly constant from very early times



3: The all-electric farm with farm machinery on a grass square set in paving. Some farmers protested that it will be a very long time before this is a practical possibility. Maybe, but how important to show such new ideas in exhibitions and so, by creating interest, be able to make the very best of them when the time is ripe

to have a day off and everyone was so obviously enjoying the fun, gave the whole event a sparkle and gaiety which I shall not readily forget.

At an early date A. J. Howard, MA, ARIC, of the Ministry of Commerce, Chairman of the Technological Committee, approached the Council of Industrial Design for advice on a suitable designer. W. M. de Majo, who was nominated, did a good job on limited funds. Some people, to whom the word "contemporary" means "the very latest ever" instead of "in the accepted manner of our time," will look for revolutionary techniques of display and then be disappointed because they do not find them. But may I remind them that this exhibition will be revolutionary to many people who will see bright, pure colour, good lettering, carefully selected and well-designed articles, good lighting and so on, all combined for the first time. What is remarkable is that such a good



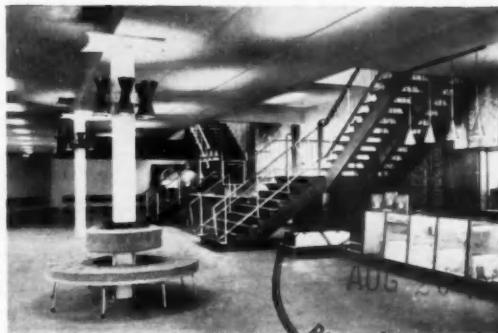
4: The story of Irish whiskey from the growing of barley to the packaging of the product—which might well show more of the imaginative handling of this display: few of the labels or wood cases give a convincing picture of the quality within. Barrels, on the other hand, have always been good, but then I doubt if even a top-grade stylist could wreck this proud and satisfying thousand-year tradition!

technique of exhibition display should have emerged in our time and that it should now be so widely accepted.

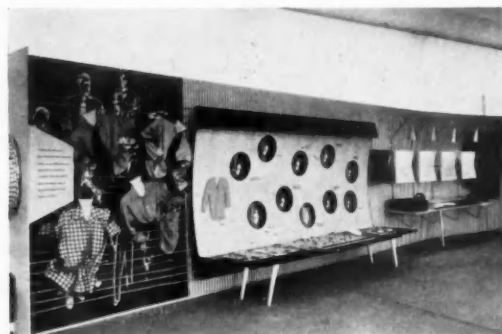
Many of the things for which Northern Ireland is famous, such as whiskey and rope—how teetotallers must relish their propinquity!—have not in themselves a high design content, yet the method of display brings out their quality. As the visual interest of the article itself increases, say in shirts—I learnt that shirtmaking is a considerable trade in Northern Ireland—so it takes precedence of display. Perfectly sound, yet a lesson not always applied. Naturally the famous Irish linen industry, which in itself combines Farm and Factory, for the growing of flax as well as the spinning and weaving of this admirable fibre are both North Irish occupations of great economic importance, is given the most prominent place in this pavilion. It seems that the recent re-introduction of cotton and the introduction of rayon to this area have brought with them a greater awareness of the importance of good design, which in time may well stimulate new and interesting patterns in fine linen damasks and other cloths. Indeed, linen may perhaps follow their example and set up its own Design Centre.

A stimulating and entertaining exhibition which I would have been most sorry to miss, and for which we should offer our congratulations to Sir Roland Nugent and his committee.

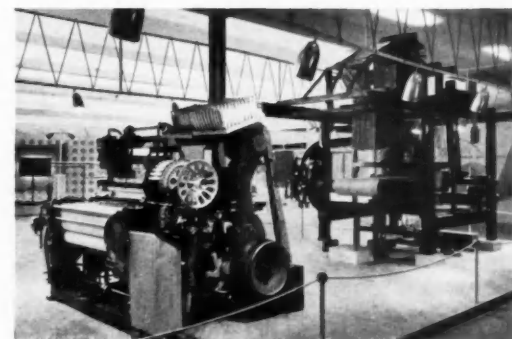
**CREDITS:** Designers, W. M. de Mayo, MBE, MSIA (chief co-ordinating designer), L. Bramberg (associate designer), J. Ljubic-Nycz, W. H. Farrow, D. Rabley. Architect (photographs 1 and 3), H. Lynch-Robinson, Dip Arch, ARIBA, MRIAI. Furniture and light fittings (1, 3, 5) designed by W. M. de Mayo and (1, 3) by Ernest Race, FSAI. Main building contractors, H. Laverty and Sons Ltd; main display contractors, A. Davies and Co Ltd, Alan Best (Exhibitions) Ltd; contractors for restaurant (1) Short Brothers and Harland Ltd. The room illustrated on front cover was arranged by Dennis Lennon, MC, ARIBA.



5: Main ground floor lounge. The saw-tooth factory roof is screened by a ceiling of thin cotton cloth in white and yellow alternately. Through this the light comes freely and I can imagine even on grey days with an admirable warmth. The hour-glass lighting fittings of copper throw light up and down. Details of seating and stairs have been worked out with care



6: The shirt-making industry has dramatised itself in a way which would have been inconceivable but a few years back. The shirts themselves, carefully selected for colour and pattern so giving a good idea of quality, and skilfully draped, come first. Then they are seen folded, with details of the production centres, and with economically worded captions. Where is the dull trade show of yesteryear?



7: New and old types of looms for weaving linen. I suspect that such exhibits will appeal to all workers, who will see, perhaps for the first time, that factories like this one can be transformed by paint and skill in colour selection

# MILAN 1951

*The ninth Triennale exhibition of decorative and industrial art and architecture*

reviewed by Robin Day, ARCA, FSIA

THE TRIENNALE IS an exhibition of art, architecture, industrial and craft design held in Milan at three-year intervals. This year's exhibition is the ninth of the sequence, and, as before, the main part of it is housed in the Palazzo dell'Arte al Parco, a large oval-shaped building within a small park in Milan. The major sections of this exhibition are surveys or treatments of international aspects of architecture and design, and these seem to me to be brilliantly and imaginatively carried out with a surprising economy of means and technique.

Using string, plaster, wire, rough timber and other comparatively inexpensive materials, the designers have conjured up a really stimulating atmosphere, without the near-permanent cabinet-making, metal-work, fine finishes and expensive animated devices which we in Britain have come to associate with post-war exhibition design.

Few working drawings were in evidence while the exhibition was being built, rapid progress apparently being made through verbal instructions from architects to fast-working and skilful craftsmen. It seemed that design decisions were being made as the work progressed, the results usually having an improvised and temporary air proper to exhibitions. Outstanding among these sections is one entitled *Man, a measure of Architecture*, designed by Ernesto Rogers. In this section panels carrying enlarged drawings and photographs are pitched in space at disturbing angles in dramatic lighting, and one becomes strangely identified with the subject, as one passes, heavy-footed, among the panels, over the deep gravel floor.

Architects Perresuti and Belgioioso have contrived a wittily displayed exhibition of industrial design, largely using photographs, among which a number of British products from the 1951 Stock List appear.

The examples of Italian furnished rooms I found a little disappointing, after the high opinion of Italian furniture which I had previously formed from books and photographs. The furnishings are beautifully made and finished, and often contain most ingenious details, but too often the general effect is slightly ostentatious, in a way one associates with the pre-war Parisian *decorateur* type of interior design.

A section on textiles shows surprising tameness in the fabric designs although they are beautifully displayed. For sheer uninhibited adventurousness, the glass and the pottery sections are perhaps the most spectacular. Individual pieces which come to mind are a huge pendant mobile with fantastic highly glazed figures and animals forming the solid motives and a series of surrealist bottles with deep niches inhabited by smaller bottles or little personages.

This trend of rich full-blooded fantasy is the most marked feature of Italian design at the Triennale, and exists side by side with, though almost opposed to, highly intellectual and austere architectural characteristics.

A large part of the Palazzo's first floor is occupied by the foreign sections. These are official exhibitions of selected design and craftwork of various countries. The finest of these foreign collections is perhaps the Finnish, showing beautiful heavy glass, shaggy rugs in dark rich colours, and decorative ceramic panels by Rut Bryk. These are hand-produced, like most of the Finnish work—though new pieces of furniture by Alvar Aalto are also on show.

The Swedish section is, as one would expect, chaste and distinguished in its presentation, with fine glass and pottery, some of the latter brilliantly decorated by Stig Lindberg; new chairs and other pieces by Elias Svedberg are also exhibited here. More furniture than



*In this year's Milan Triennale, Britain is represented by only one exhibit of any size—the room above, designed by Robin Day and showing furniture made to his designs by S. Hille and Co Ltd as well as textiles and accessories by the various designers and manufacturers named in Mr Day's article below*

anything else is shown in the Danish section, where the designers' preoccupation with chairs is much in evidence, including famous examples by Finn Juhl.

This large Danish section almost surrounds a small room which the present writer designed at the invitation of the Triennale organisers. I had the good fortune of being able to carry out this scheme through the enthusiastic backing of the directors of S. Hille and Co Ltd, who made and sent to Italy all the furniture exhibited. We have also been able to show a large Ascher panel by Henry Moore; sculpture by Reg Butler; Lucie Rie and Hans Coper pottery; Fritz Lampl glass; Mournie Textile rugs; a printed linen fabric designed by Lucienne Day and produced by Heal's; standard lamp by Thorn Electrical Industries Ltd; and a decorative panel by Geoffrey Clark.

Other countries exhibiting are France, Germany, Austria, Holland, Spain, Switzerland and Belgium. The Belgian section is really remarkable; its ostentatious and unaccountable vulgarity in both exhibits and their presentation is beyond description. The Swiss section, designed by Max Bill, is small, and an outstanding piece of exhibition design. The room—high, dark and roughly a cube in shape—has each wall and

ceiling in a different dark colour. The floor is of white marble, on which stand a number of drums of various diameters, waist-high and widely spaced. The only lighting in the room is inside these drums, which contain various Swiss products such as fabrics, instruments, jewellery, pottery, etc. The general effect upon entering the room is very compelling and mysterious (though on examination the pottery and fabrics are rather mundane in design).

No American work was displayed at the time the exhibition opened, but a special building was under construction in the park which I understood was to house an exhibition of American domestic design.

The experience of seeing, in close juxtaposition, selected contemporary work from many countries is deeply interesting and to be highly recommended for anyone visiting Italy during this summer (the Triennale remains open until 30 September); the only saddening reflections for a visitor from this country being that in this internationally important cultural exhibition, many smaller and poorer countries than ours are represented, while we have no official design exhibit . . . in a field in which we could certainly hold our own.

PATRONS OF  
DESIGN: 4



BY BERNARD  
DENVIR

## A NINETEENTH-CENTURY PATRON

*Organiser, editor, author, designer and Treasury official,  
Sir Henry Cole was the first Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum  
and an early advocate of design education*

ANYONE TODAY who has anything to do with the relation of art to industry owes a great debt to a Victorian civil servant, of whose name he may well never have heard. The thoughtful, rather truculent face of Sir Henry Cole, Knight Commander of the Bath, surveys visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum, as they ascend one of the staircases in that establishment, for whose foundation he was largely responsible. It is the face of a careerist; it is also the face of an idealist. Henry Cole combined the versatility of a Leonardo with the imaginative energy of a film star's publicity agent and the scrupulous regard for administrative routine and accuracy of a Treasury official. He applied all these qualities to the furtherance of the fine arts, and to effecting what was very largely a "shot-gun" marriage between art and industry.

He was a man of astonishing ruthlessness. His powers of dialectic would have baffled a Marxist or a

medieval schoolman. He pestered, he plotted, and he schemed. He managed committees and cabinet ministers in such a way that they never knew what had hit them. He cajoled industrialists, he swayed mass meetings and he manipulated the Press. Had his interests been commercial rather than cultural, he would have been one of the greatest tycoons of the century. As it is, his fame bears little or no relation to his achievements.

Starting off as a solicitor's clerk, Cole worked his way into the Record Office. Within a year or so he was petitioning Parliament, organising committees, and generally making a nuisance of himself. The experience was useful, for to list his achievements during the next fifty years is to write a cultural history of the nineteenth century. He ran the campaigns for a penny post and for a uniform railway gauge; he was largely responsible for the organisation, and, in a way, the success of the 1851 exhibition. He helped



to reform the patent laws and to found the Victoria and Albert Museum, of which he became the first director. He was the guiding light in the erection of the Albert Hall, he helped to found the National Training School for Music (now the Royal College of Music) and the National Cookery School. He also initiated army reforms, introduced drill into boys' schools, reorganised the art educational system of Britain, started an association for the self-betterment of agricultural workers, and ended his life advocating sewerage reforms.

But his most lasting achievement was the most revolutionary.

Even before the generation of Morris (whom he employed to decorate the dining-room in the new South Kensington Museum) he concerned himself with the shape of things, and it is a measure of his achievement that he—a pioneer in the field—did not reject, as his immediate successors did, the advantages of the machine. Cole was no medievalist, but a man of insight and imagination, who was, above all other things, practical.

His first official contact with the fine arts was when he was moved to the Treasury, there to help with putting into practice the Penny Post scheme for whose success he was so largely responsible. He commissioned William Wyon, an obscure Academician, to design the new "penny blacks," and history has approved of the choice. Less fortunately, but more ambitiously, he persuaded Mulready to design a prepaid envelope. This turned out to be ambitious rather than appropriate, and aroused public comment largely because the unfortunate artist had endowed one of the flying angels with only one leg.

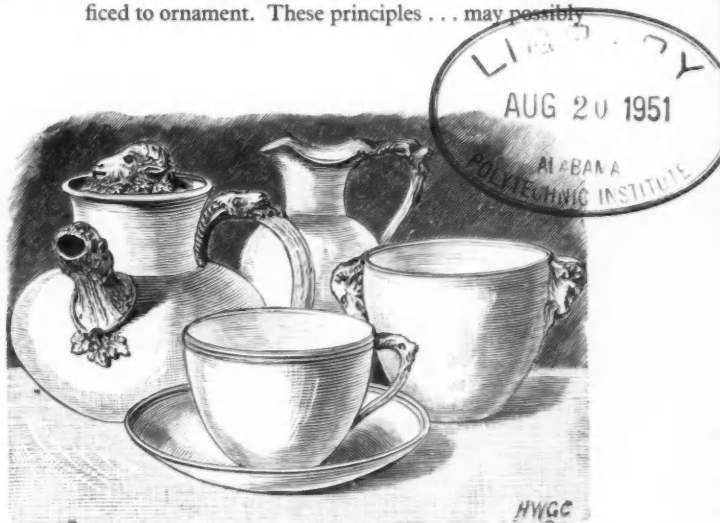
In 1841 Cole commenced on a project which would seem to belong to our age rather than his own. The demands of a growing family had impelled him to look about for some way of increasing his income, and he decided to publish a series of books for children. Assuming the name of "Felix Summerly," he rapidly made *Summerly's Home Treasury* an outstanding success. Not content with the usual hacks, he employed such artists as Mulready, Maclise, Redgrave, Landseer and the Linnells to illustrate fairy stories and the like. He also published other popular educational works.

In 1845 the (now Royal) Society of Arts, with which Cole was to be intimately connected, offered prizes for the design of a tea service. Cole, with the co-operation of Mintons, produced a "Felix Summerly Tea Service," which remained a standard design throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, a few "F.S." pieces are still included in the makers' stock patterns. It was awarded a silver medal, and praised by the Prince Consort, who especially admired the milk jug. To a generation like our own, which is apt to lump together in an omnibus of disapproval all Victorian domestic designs, this tea service should be a revelation. It is simple, but not puritanical; it is eminently functional, and both cheap and easy to produce.

The success of the Felix Summerly tea service impelled Cole to a more ambitious scheme. In 1847 he organised Summerly's Art Manufactures, which had as its aim "to revive the good old practice of connecting the best art with familiar objects in daily use. In doing this, Art Manufactures will aim to produce in each article superior utility, which is not to be sacrificed to ornament. These principles . . . may possibly

*Under the name of Summerly, Henry Cole was a designer as well as a patron of design. His Felix Summerly tea service (right) was produced in co-operation with Minton's and had a long run of popularity*

This illustration and the portrait of Henry Cole on facing page are reproduced from *The Story of Exhibitions* by Kenneth W. Luckhurst, by courtesy of the author and the publishers (The Studio Ltd)



contain the germs of a style which England of the nineteenth century may call its own."

One can hardly approve of all the products of this laudable enterprise. The "Bride's Inkstand" designed by John Bell the sculptor, which could be had at prices ranging from two guineas upwards, did more honour to Cole's gift of nomenclature than to its designer's sense of visual responsibility, and the imagination boggles at the same artist's "The Bitten Tongue," a mustard pot in porcelain. But there were many admirable things produced by a variety of firms to the designs of a large number of highly regarded artists. It was not the fault of Felix Summerly that he functioned in a woeful artistic period.

Another and even more spectacular contribution which Cole made to English culture was in evolving the idea of the Christmas card. In 1843 Felix Summerly commissioned John Callcott Horsley, an Academician who had been responsible for several of the frescoes in the Palace of Westminster, to produce a greeting card suitable for Christmas. Horsley's effort, which was not without its quiet charm, had a great success, and not only introduced a pleasant custom into English life, but opened to artists a source of income which they still find available.

Shortly after setting up Summerly's Art Manufactures, Cole founded a magazine, the *Journal of Design*, which continued a not very successful existence for three years, until in 1852 its editor took over the South Kensington Museum. Two things are worth mentioning about it. In the first place it set itself to advocate "better laws, and a better tribunal to protect copyright in design, and for a largely in-

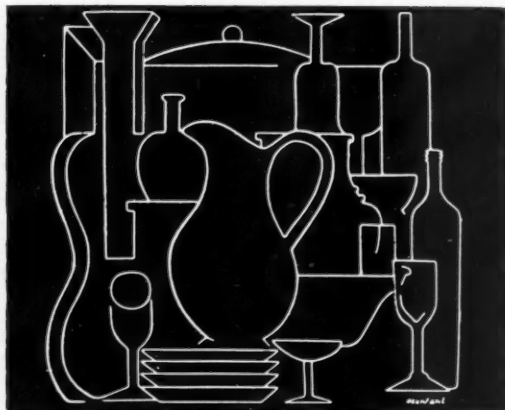
creased extension of copyright. We think the restless demands of the public for constant novelty are alike mischievous to the progress of good ornamental art, as they are to all commercial interests." Secondly, and this is a typical Cole touch, each issue contained actual samples of fabrics discussed in it.

There was always something of the artistic despot about Cole, even though the despotism was paternal, and it was given its full chance to expand when, largely as a result of his efforts as a Commissioner for the Exhibition of 1851, he was made head of the Government Schools of Design. These had been in a state of more or less suspended animation since their foundation in the 'thirties. But Cole's restless ambition nursed them into a position where they could eventually develop into what is now the Royal College of Art, and it must be remembered that for a quarter of a century he combined that function with the directorship of what was eventually to be the Victoria and Albert Museum, which started as an adjunct to the school.

When Cole took over the Schools of Design, their London headquarters were at Somerset House. His first step was to move them to Marlborough House. There he set about collecting examples of good ornamental art, ranging from Indian textiles to Sheffield bread-knives. His most startling innovation, which eventually had to succumb to hostile industrial pressure, was the creation of a section devoted to bad design. Charles Dickens (probably on the suggestion of Cole, who had a keen nose for publicity) paid a visit to Marlborough House to see this new museum. A few days later he wrote an amusing account in



A plate from Cole's *Journal of Design*, 1849: his suggestion for everyday things to be drawn in chalk on a school blackboard



Drawing by Ozenfant, 1925. "The Purists of the 1920's pointed to the objects purified and standardised by long use" (S. Giedion)



The first Christmas card: designed for "Felix Summerly" in 1843 by J. C. Horsley; illustrated here by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

*Household Words* of the sad fate of Mr Crumpet of Clump Lodge, Brixton, who in an ill-advised moment also visited the same place, and ever afterwards was discontented with his own domestic arrangements, and "haunted by horrible shapes."

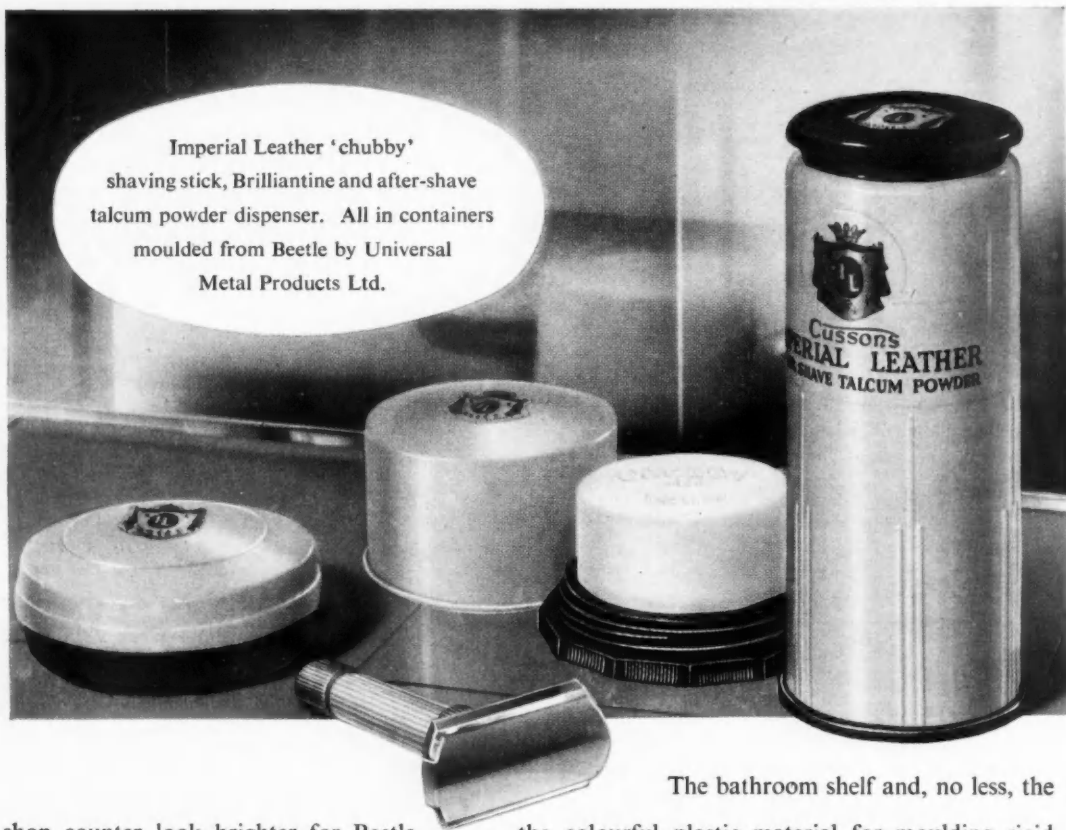
In 1873 the School was moved to the South Kensington estate which had been purchased from the profits of the Great Exhibition. In amalgamating it with a museum which would emphasise applied art at the expense of fine art, Cole was realising at once a public and a private ambition. He had created an institution which would be a cradle for industrial designers. Sedulously he collected examples of the application of art to industry, wherever he could find them; he was interested in the design of babies' clothes and in making facsimiles of the Bayeux tapestry. One of his main preoccupations was ensuring that art should be properly taught in elementary schools, and he took the greatest pains to provide proper teachers and suitable materials.

Cole himself was something of an artist, exhibiting at the Royal Academy and producing etchings of some merit. For the benefit of the teachers educated at the Schools of Design, he drew up a series of simple drawings of great interest and significance. These have recently been reproduced in Professor Siegfried

Giedion's *Mechanization takes Command* face to face with a page of twentieth-century drawings by Ozenfant. The analogy is more than a superficial one; Cole's drawings represent a sense of function and purpose which is entirely in harmony with the spirit of the present century.

It is not surprising that Cole should have become a kind of industrial design consultant, long before that profession was consciously thought of. He designed an exhibition stand which has since passed into almost universal use, consisting of a series of radiating frames which can be turned around a central axis, and so display the maximum number of prints or drawings in a given space. He gave his opinions about Hungerford Bridge and Wellington Street viaduct to a select committee of the House of Commons; he started a universal catalogue of books on art, and held strong views on the design of the Albert Hall and on the planning and functions of art galleries and museums.

Had he lived in a more spacious age, Cole might have been a Leonardo. Had he been living today, he might have been a strong rival to Herbert Read. Few people in the nineteenth century had a keener sense of the pattern of modern culture, and few people made as great a contribution towards the definition of that culture.



The bathroom shelf and, no less, the shop counter look brighter for Beetle — the colourful plastic material for moulding rigid containers. In the packaging of cosmetic and toilet requisites Beetle excels, not only for its strength and resistance to fats, oil and grease, but above all for its wide range of beautiful colours in translucent, semi-translucent and opaque shades. The well-designed, warmly textured Beetle container has an almost unlimited re-use life, remaining a permanent reminder of your brand name long after the contents are consumed. So if your products find their way to the bathroom shelf, or even if they don't and you are looking for a strong, colourful, inexpensive pack, be sure when you are considering materials to give a thought to

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# Legibility

## OR "ARCHITECTURAL APPROPRIATENESS"?

*South Bank lettering reviewed by Noel Carrington*

THE SOUTH BANK display has been warmly praised—and with justice. It has a gay and exciting quality, and only occasionally is it overdone at the expense of the goods displayed: what an immense advance in confidence and technique since the last great national exhibition, at Wembley in 1924.

In one branch of display, however, I think the designers have failed to reach the standard that might have been expected. I refer to the lettering and typography, not in the catalogues and guides (which, if not always distinguished, are workmanlike and readable) but on the buildings and direction signs.

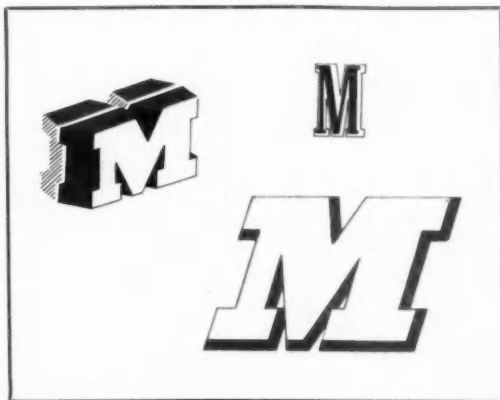
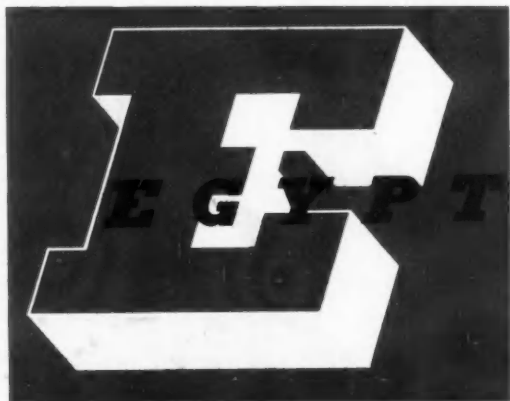
In all matters of lettering there is a limited ground on which there is general agreement, if not scientific certainty; and there is a much larger area open to endless disputation and variation of taste. One can have feelings for type-faces as one does for types of feminine beauty, and in a lifetime one's feelings for both may change.

It is generally agreed that in any Roman alphabet it is of cardinal importance that each letter should be

clearly differentiated from another. There are of course many other elements in the designing of letters, but for the moment I will keep to this matter of differentiation. The style of a letter can be varied in many ways and still retain its essential character. Engraving, penmanship and other crafts develop characteristic tendencies such as the thickening of downstrokes or the use of a serif to finish a stroke. Accentuation of thickness in strokes can even help to differentiate letters; in the types used for books or newspapers it gives a desirable balance between black and white. Similarly the serif provides a link between letters and assists in the formation of a word. Thickening a stroke or increasing the size of a serif to excess causes a letter to lose its essential character, so that it is less easily distinguished at a glance. This sounds, and is, elementary, yet I think it needs re-stating today.

In the eighteenth century, letter-forms established by masters like Caslon and Baskerville held the field in this country. The Victorian printers and signwriters indulged in wanton extravagance of form, almost all

*Examples of the letter-forms recommended to architects and display designers in the type specimen booklet drawn up by the Festival Typography Panel. It may well be asked whether the E retains any of the essential character of the letter as usually read in this country. (Some less extreme examples from the same booklet were illustrated in DESIGN last November: No. 23, page 32)*





principles of legibility being abandoned for a while. They were re-established largely by the followers of William Morris in calligraphy and printing, and we went through a period of what one may term puritanism in letter forms. In the 'twenties, Johnston and Gill re-introduced the sanserif in very carefully designed proportions. In Germany these and other types were re-introduced about the same time. They were welcomed particularly by advertisers who required a wider range of expression.

Recently, every Victorian extravagance has been revived—perhaps for somewhat sophisticated reasons. Typographers have to serve many masters. What is suitable on a soap carton is not necessarily desirable as a newspaper headline or in a direction sign; an established trade name is recognised by its shape and has not to be read in the ordinary sense. There now seems to be a danger that the dictates of fashion are about to obscure a common-sense attitude to lettering.

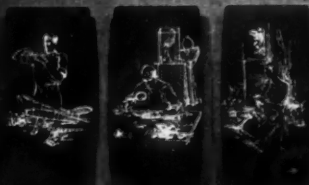
The Typography Panel set up by the Festival organisation announced with a certain flourish of trumpets that the form of display letter chosen for architectural and display use in the Festival (as distinct from the special type-face designed for *printed* matter) was what the Victorians called "Egyptian." A specimen-booklet informs us that "nothing could be more British in feeling." Whether British in origin or not, that is not necessarily a recommendation for the occasion in question. The Egyptian types

*Although the Typography Panel warned designers against long sentences in Egyptian capital letters, this did not prevent their abuse, as below. Fortunately, a familiar italic lower-case type was often preferred (as on right)*

were first revived by Stempel in Germany under the name of Memphis (1929), but the Typographic Panel declared that existing examples "lacked sufficient 'colour' and character; even the necessary architectural appropriateness." Such phrases are suspect. In the specimen recommended, the slab serif is usually so exaggerated that the letter-forms are horribly distorted. Indeed, the book seems to encourage distortion for the sake of gaining "character," a curious misrendering of the term.

The use of Egyptian has not been rigidly adhered to in the Exhibition, perhaps because some designers disliked it, perhaps because its unsuitability became apparent. It remains, however, the dominant letter-form. My opinion, after some time spent in examining the exhibition in detail, is that it has proved an unsuitable type-face, and that it has been commonly used in the wrong way. Illustrations will serve better than description.

## HOBBIES AND THE HOME



*it is the things we make, the articles we collect and the plants & animals we rear that play so great a part in turning the house into a home*





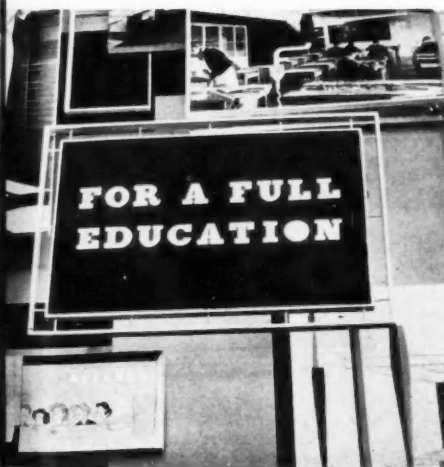
*The South Bank signposting generally is not large enough. In these two instances, the Egyptian is fortunately not used. It is questionable whether condensed sans-serif capitals were the best choice for the main signposts (right). Larger lower-case letters would probably have done the job more effectively*



*The separate capital letters on the points of the awning, against a dazzle background, do not make for quick reading*



*The station sign (in small grey letters on grey stone) is altogether insignificant where it should be bold*



*(Left) a typical display title from the New Schools section, in cut-out lettering, illuminated*

*(Right) a sign using three-dimensional capital letters of another kind, here thrown into confusion by their own shadow*



## Readers write about Festival Patterns

SIR: Mark Hartland Thomas, in his article on the Festival Pattern Group (*DESIGN*, May-June, page 22) referred to the three-dimensional atomic structure lighting fitting at the Science Exhibition, South Kensington, which was not ready to photograph when that issue of *DESIGN* went to press.

The remarkable 600-foot-long fitting, which was constructed by this Company to the design of Brian Peake, FRIBA, consists of 56 sections painted white, of various lengths from seven to 17 feet. On each of these, several groups of five lamps are mounted on "spiders."

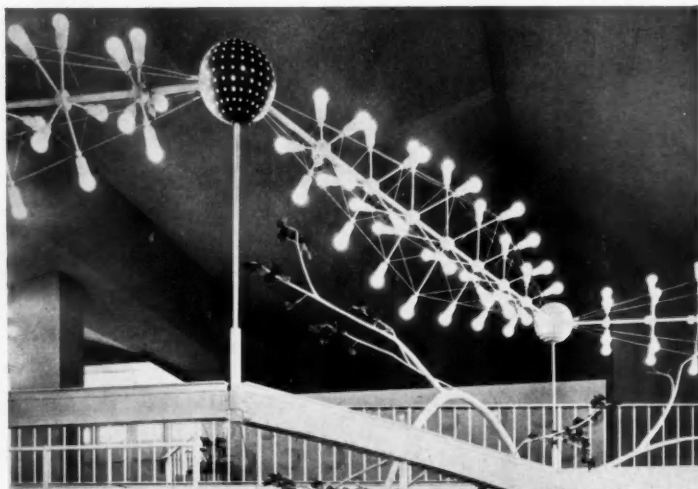
The fitting is purely decorative, but its design is derived from the atomic structure of carbon, the red spheres at the junctions of sections representing the nuclei, while the lamps represent the electrons. Approximately 1,800 lamps are employed on the "spiders" and inside the spheres.

K. S. MORRIS,  
The General Electric Co Ltd,  
London, WC2

SIR: It is fascinating to read in Mark Hartland Thomas's article how the Festival Pattern Group developed the decorative applications of crystallographic patterns. If the Council of Industrial Design can continue to stimulate such co-operative programmes in the future, this country may in a few years be leading the world in matters of design.

To trace the growth of an idea is an interesting study, and it may be worth while to record how this idea began. Credit is due to Norbert Dutton, who organised for the Society of Industrial Artists the weekend designers' course at Ashridge in 1949, seeing the possibilities of Professor Kathleen Lonsdale's subject. I suggested it to him at one of the SIA's informal meetings, having previously attended a lunch-time lecture at University College, London, on seeing a notice in the scientific journal *Nature*.

Professor Lonsdale referred in her original lecture to Charles Biederman's rather massive book *Art as the evolution of visual knowledge*, published privately at Red Wing, Minnesota, in 1948. In the section commencing on page 571 the author discusses the worlds of the scientist and the artist, and finds much



*Assembly and transport from the factory in Birmingham to the site in London were among the problems involved in the production of the atomic-structure lighting fitting for the Science Exhibition—the subject of Mr Morris's letter. A relatively small part of its 600-foot length is seen in the photograph above*

in common in the two aspects of culture. His illustrations show mathematical models, some X-ray diffraction patterns taken by Professor Lonsdale, and other natural patterns obtained by scientists.

Such developments as this are stimulated by any interchange of ideas between the several arts and sciences.

DENIS L. JOHNSTON,  
Aldenharn, Hertfordshire

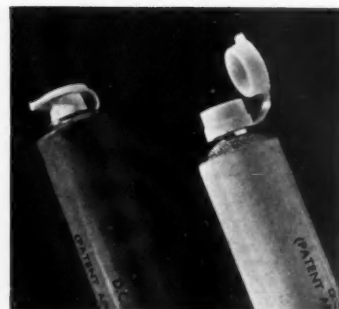
### Britain has made it

SIR: We noted in the May-June issue of *DESIGN* a report on a new French polythene closure moulded on to a collapsible tube, and we feel that you may be interested to see a tube with our D.C.3 closure (patent pending), which the French closure seems to resemble very closely.

The D.C.3 is a captive closure made from polythene, which can be screwed on to any threaded tube, and can either be fitted with a wad which seals the tube or, alternatively, can be supplied with a diaphragm which has to be pierced before the contents of the tube can be expelled.

Patents have already been granted for two types of captive closure made in PVC: our models D.C.1, (with cover-type top) and D.C.2 (with plug-type top).

(Miss) T. M. ASH,  
Universal Metal Products Ltd,  
Salford, Lancashire



*Above, two captive closures of British design referred to in the letter from Universal Metal Products Ltd: the D.C.2, shown closed, and the D.C.3, open*

## Birmingham bus fronts

SIR: In *Design in the Festival*, in the section which deals with commercial motors, you illustrate a Birmingham City Transport Department double-deck omnibus showing the new frontal treatment used on this vehicle. The caption states that this was "originated" by the City Transport Department.

May I point out that this frontal treatment of double-deck vehicles was originated by this Company early in 1942, as covered by Registered Design No 839978, taken out on 2 January 1943 and extended for a further five years on 8 December 1947.

The Birmingham City Transport Department sought our permission to use this design, which was given to them on 15 September 1948; enclosed are copies of the letters exchanged in which this permission was given.

D. M. SINCLAIR,  
General Manager,  
The Birmingham and Midland  
Motor Omnibus Co Ltd,  
Birmingham 41

¶ We quote from the letter from Birmingham City Transport to the Mid-



land Company: "our proposals are very much akin to your registered design; indeed it is true to say that the pleasing appearance of your latest vehicles influenced us. . . ." EDITOR.



Above, a Crossley bus of Birmingham City Transport Department photographed at the South Bank exhibition; left, its forerunner in frontal treatment, a Midland Red bus of the Midland Company's registered design

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## DESIGN IN THE FESTIVAL

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"most attractive" (*The Scotsman*),  
"lavishly illustrated" (*Newcastle Journal*),  
"a handsomely finished book" (*Furniture Record*),  
"attractively produced" (*Advertiser's Weekly*),  
"a handsome review . . . worth obtaining and preserving" (*Cabinet Maker*)

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Board made from wood waste

**TIMBER BOARD**, made mainly from wood waste, can now be mechanically mass-produced in continuous lengths. Waste has been used in this way previously, but it is claimed that the new process operates "at a lower cost than ever before". A small percentage of synthetic resin (maximum 5 per cent) is added to the wood waste. The resulting material, known as Celloboard, can be produced in thicknesses from  $\frac{3}{16}$  in. to  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. and in widths up to 4 feet. It can be worked by normal joinery methods using hand or machine tools; can be cut or sawn or glued like natural wood, and, for use in tropical countries, can be proofed against vermin and fungus.

A wide variety of finishes is possible: Celloboard can be painted, distempered, waxed, varnished, cellulosed, or faced

with paper, fabric, Formica, Warerite, metal or wood-veneer. Materials available in continuous rolls (e.g. paper, fabric, foil) can be incorporated in the surface during manufacture.

Plant for making Celloboard (but not the material itself) will be supplied by the Vere Engineering Co Ltd, London.

### Engraving acrylic sheet

**THE ENGRAVING** of acrylic plastic sheets to form signs for indoor or outdoor use has been developed by Taylor Industries Ltd, Rowlands Gill, Co. Durham, to include reverse engraving and under-cutting.

The design to be reproduced is either supplied by the customer or evolved in the firm's studio. It is copied to the correct size, reversed left to right, and laid down on a clear plastic sheet, which may be of any thickness. The outline is

roughly traced and then the work of engraving the back of the plastic is begun. The plastic is engraved and undercut to a depth depending upon the thickness of the sheet. The engraving is done with hand tools of special design, with which it is possible to cut to within a fraction of an inch of the front surface.

When any required colour has been painted in, the engraved sheet is backed by another, of plain colour, and the two are bonded together, sealing the worked surface from the atmosphere so that the engraving can remain out of doors for any period.

### Advice on mobile shops

**AN INCREASING DEMAND** for mobile shops has led Smith's Electric Vehicles Ltd, Gateshead on Tyne II, to establish a Mobile Shop Advisory Service. Through this, informed advice is freely available on all problems connected with the design, installation and operation of mobile shops for all trades. A current example of collaboration between the shopfitter and operator (in this case Laws Stores, Tyneside multiple grocers) is to be found in the design of a shop counter in Formica with a special shelf for shopping-baskets.

*This ship's cabin, shown at the Plastics Exhibition in London in June, was designed by Gaby Schreiber, FSI A, to demonstrate some applications of Celloboard, a manufactured timber board whose other uses include coach-building, furniture, kitchen and shop fitting. The material can be finished in many ways; in this picture the wall, floor, ceiling, wash-bureau and bunk are all of mahogany-veneer Celloboard.*



*Curtains which swing away from the window as a ship rolls are not a heartening sight for the queasy passenger. In many of the illustrations in pages 10-16, curtains are tied back. Alternatively they can be enclosed in a double frame, which keeps them close to the window whether they are drawn back or across; this method was used by Heal's in the MV Changsha for China Navigation Co Ltd, 1949 (below)*







*Drawn by A. R. THOMSON, R.A.*

## He fights among the trees

It is on the constant war waged in the forests by entomologists like Walter Griswold, that world output of paper is greatly dependent. His enemies are the pests and parasites which attack the trees from which the wood pulp for newsprint is obtained. Thirty-two year old Griswold† graduated in Forestry at the University of New Brunswick and had already carried out research in the forests before joining Bowaters' staff. He is officer in charge of the Newfoundland field workers who pry into the cracks in the bark and beat the boughs over extended sheets to collect specimens of the

pests threatening the growing trees. Once these pests have been identified in the Dominion Entomological Laboratory it is Griswold's job, in co-operation with Canadian Government experts, to plan the appropriate counter-attack. One successful method is the introduction of species of parasites and virus disease as allies to prey on those already in possession. It is largely upon the success or failure of this silent struggle to protect the forests that the supply of paper to keep pace with the world-wide spread of literacy depends in the years to come.

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† Fictitious name for a real character.

# Notebook

## British prestige overseas

AN INVITATION which was perhaps unexpected but certainly not unwelcome came to Merchant Adventurers of London Ltd from the organisers of an industrial exhibition in Fredericia, a seaport town on the Jutland coast of Denmark. They asked that some Merchant Adventurers' light fittings might be sent for display in their exhibition, and explained: "We have seen your fittings designed by Paul Boissevain, and find that they combine the best quality with a beautiful design, and for this reason we should very much like to show them at the exhibition which should give our public an impression of the high standard of production abroad."

Meanwhile, in the States, a fabric designed by Tibor Reich of Stratford-on-Avon has been awarded a Citation of

Merit in the annual competition of the American Institute of Decorators. This fabric was grey, gold and off-white in colour, and similar in texture to the *Cymbeline* pattern which was illustrated in *DESIGN* last month.

## SIA

Lynton Lamb, FSIA, painter and illustrator, has been elected President of the Society of Industrial Artists (in succession to Christian Barman).

Peter Ray, FSIA, is the editor of *Designers in Britain*: 3, reviewed in our leading article this month. The book is published by Allan Wingate, price 45s.

## Consumer preferences

Even in such mundane matters as the style of men's vests, retailers' estimates may lag behind changes in public taste. This is a conclusion which may be drawn from recent market research by I. and R. Morley Ltd. Morleys make vests in two styles—one with a button front, the other with round neck and closed front. Two separate investigations last year and this year, with different grades of merchandise and different consumer panels, showed that an average of 64.5 per cent of wearers preferred the closed front, as against 28.5 per cent choosing the button front (with seven per cent couldn't-care-less).

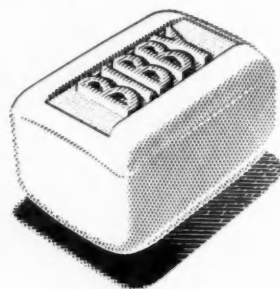
Morleys' sales to retailers can be compared with these figures. The percentage of closed-front vests sold has risen each year from 1947 (when it was three per cent) to 1951; but even now, at 27 per cent, it is far behind the expressed preference of consumers.

## Next to godliness

The soap industry, in recent months, has been paying more than lip service to the word "design." Knight's *Family Health* soap has appeared in a new

shape, colour and smell. Also, the lettering and the wrapper for Knight's *Castile* have been redesigned by Raymond Loewy Associates, while for Crosfields, another company of the Lever group, the same consultants have designed the wrapper of a brand of toilet soap which is new to this country—*Breeze*.

But perhaps the most practical innovation has been made by Bibbys, who have changed the shape of their tablets of household soap by rounding off the edges, thus anticipating the normal effect of using the soap and making a new tablet as easy to hold in the hand as one that is partly worn.



## Midland opportunity

The City of Birmingham announces a competition for the design of a coffee set and a condiment set as civic plate, with the hint that at a later date further items may be required which will have to follow the style of the winning designs. This competition, which closes on 1 October, is for designers living in the West Midlands only. Entry forms from the Museum and Art Gallery, Congreve Street, Birmingham 3.

## Credit where due

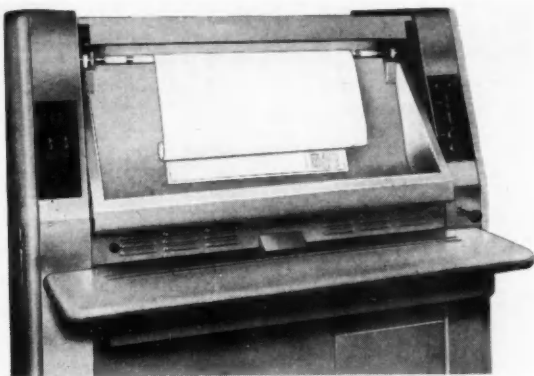
A. C. Gill Ltd, Nottingham, inform us that the bride and bridesmaids' veils which they made as members of the Festival Pattern Group were designed by Mrs L. Hardy and Mrs G. Edwards—not as stated in a caption in May-June *DESIGN* (page 16).

The Heal fabric *Lacy*, illustrated on p. 20 of July *DESIGN*, was designed by Roger Nicholson, ARCA, and not by Lucienne Day as previously stated. A Lucienne Day fabric, *Calyx*, appears in this issue, on p. 21.

The toy horses and squirrel illustrated in *Design in the Festival* (p. 70) were made as well as designed by Madge Dent, for Heal's. In the same book, the printed linen (p. 25) and the *Flower Pot* scarf (p. 65) were designed for Liberty's by Victoria Norrington and Marie Chant respectively.



Left, the lounge in the Festival Press and Radio Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard. Designed by Hilton Wright, ARIBA, the Club is furnished throughout in contemporary style—largely with furniture from the tax-free price range



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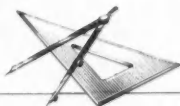
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"Bring me fire that I may purify the house with sulphur" wrote Homer in the *Odyssey*. From these ancient medicinal applications, sulphur, in the form of sulphuric acid and other chemicals has so extended its uses that today this yellow rock, which burns to form choking fumes, is one of the most important elements used as a raw material in modern civilisation. In recent times most of the world's needs for elemental sulphur—amounting to 5-6 million tons annually—have been supplied from deposits in the U.S.A., but these are fast becoming exhausted as more and more sulphur is needed for industrial, agricultural and other purposes.

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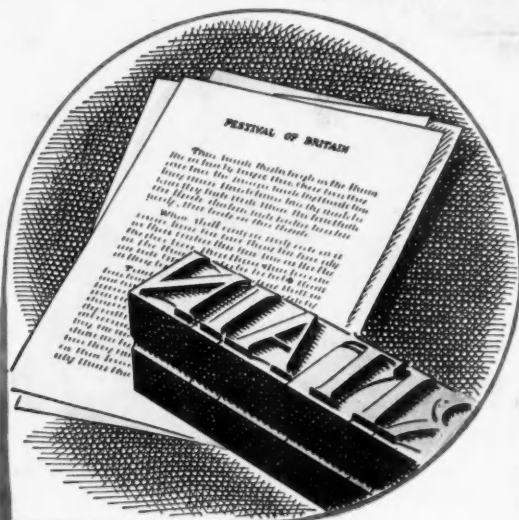
been developing methods of making sulphuric acid from anhydrite, which is found in large quantities in many parts of Great Britain. It is fortunate, now that the sulphur situation is critical, that I.C.I. is thus able not only to increase its own production of sulphuric acid from British sources, but also to place its accumulated research and production knowledge at the disposal of some of the principal British acid users.

Plans are indeed now going forward to install new plants which will make sulphuric acid from this indigenous raw material and thus reduce the need to import sulphur from overseas. I.C.I. has also converted other plants to utilise the sulphur recovered as spent oxide made in the purification of town gas.





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K40 S.O. Code No. 88-1266-32-51.\*

